Arab women tell of harassment

By TANIA KUTHY

The Gulf war and simply associating any women wearing a head scarf, hijab, Abdulhadi, Turkish women who were sitting in a head scarf and were subject to similar abuse. Mrs Radhi, an organiser of a Brunswick Arab women's group, said incidents of harassment began before the war started and were continuing. "Our women told us they were subject to verbal abuse in Brunswick and when their husband interfered a fight broke out and Mrs Radhi said: "Another woman had her scarf ripped off her head by two men after she got off a train in Sydney Rd."

Women are being asked if they are Arab or if they are too frighten to go out. "We are all under a lot of pressure and it's sad," Mr Radhi said.

"It left Lebanon to escape war as did many others. It is harder to face theversed alone than it was to be born and live in freedom and multiculturism.

"We don't want war yet we are being attacked because we wear head scarfs. Not all Muslims and Arabs support Iraq.

Arab and Muslim women are 300 per cent Muslim. Egypt is 90 per cent Muslim and Iraq is 60 per cent, but they don't claim they are Muslims. This is not a religious war it is cinema. Christians and Jews against Muslims, it's about oil and nothing more.

The co-ordinator of the Committee against Arab discrimination, Joe Wakkak, said the group was receiving reports every day of attacks against Arabs, particularly women, in the northern suburbs. He said all the attacks were reported at residences who lacked the fear voice of Arab demand. "The attacks are based on ignorance. There is a poor assumption between anyone who looks Arab and the Iraq war is our war."

Brunswick has a big Arab and Muslim population and it is those who have been intimidated into silence. It's terribly wrong and very stupid," he said. Mr Wakkak urged residents to report incidents to the police or the Comite Against Discrimination Art. The Victorian Arab Orthodox Community Association, Mr Wakkak, said about 600 people of discrimination against Arabs and Muslims were anxious and fearful under the Equal Opportunity Act.

She said people who had been abused should call the Committee for Equal Opportunity on 933 3222.

No news of two in peace camp

The battle of a Brunswick man and a Currimboola North man taking part in a peace camp in Iraq remains unclear.

No news has been received of Stephen Blair from Brunswick, or Robert Bowden since they went after fighting broke out.

They are members of the Gulf Peace Group and are among the last Australians left in Iraq. Group members in Melbourne disputed media reports that camp members had fled the war in a rush after the conflict began.

A 45-year-old Brunswick resident, Mr Wakkak, a member of the group, Mr Wakkak, said there was no news of the two men and that his numbers were 25 and 26.

Group members are protesting the use of military force to drive Iraq forces from Kuwait. It believes sanctions alone should have been used.

Mr Blair and Mr Bowden said friends in Australia that they planned to stay after the war began to help in relief and humanitarian work. Mr Blair is the International Arab Radio Network's correspondent in the Gulf but is unable to transmit information because of the lack of equipment.

The network has sent a letter to Jordan's King Hussein asking him to negotiate with Iraq President Saddam Hussein for the safe passage of radio workers.

It also wants to meet prisoners of war to assess their health and welfare.

MPs divided over Aussie Gulf role

MEMBERS of Parliament whose electorates include Brunswick have differing views on the Gulf war and its effects.

All are member of the Labor Party and share the same seat.

The Member for Melbourne, Mr Garry Hand, supported military action.

While the world seems to be engrossed with the Gulf war, this message on a Nicholson St billboard offers a solution.

The Member for Brunswick and Treasurer, Mr Ron Hopper, is overseas.

In the Federal arena, the views of the Member for Wide Bay, Minister Mr Hewson, and the Member for Hume, Minister for Defence (Federal), Mr John Howard, have been well canvassed in the media.

Both support Australia's involvement in the Gulf conflict.

They make in favour of the Federal Government's military defined action, passed in the Parliament last week.